

DESIGN ANALYSIS
Informative Speaking / Topic Choice
1 September 2009

DESIRED RESULTS

By following Wiggins and McTighe's (2008) suggestions for "Establishing Curricular Priorities," we can more purposefully identify specific desired results for our class session on Informative Speaking and Topic Choice. We want to craft a lesson plan that focuses on fostering "enduring understanding" of the "big ideas" related to Informative Speaking and Topic Choice (Figure 1.2, pp. 9-12). To identify those concepts we want students to utilize long after they leave this class session, we look to the 2006 Kansas Core Outcomes Project and the COMS130 text by David Zarefsky.

The Kansas Core Outcomes Project identifies "minimum core competencies" expected of students who complete college course work in basic communication classes (p. 118). These expectations were originally set forth by the National Communication Association (NCA) and were adopted by the Kansas Speech Educators in Higher Education Interest Group nearly eight years ago.

The Kansas Core Outcomes Project contains at least three competency expectations relevant to the subjects of "Informative Speaking" and "Topic Choice." Specifically, the document indicates that the competent speaker must be able to exhibit the ability to:

- "Determine the purpose of oral discourse . . ." and ". . . understand that different contexts require differing purposes" (I. c., p. 119).
- "Choose a topic and restrict it according to the purpose and the audience. Identify a subject that is relevant to the speaker's role, knowledge, concerns, and interests. Narrow the topic adapting it to the purpose and time constraints for communicating. Adapt the treatment of the topic to the context for communication" (II. a., b., c., p. 119).
- "Fulfill the purpose of oral discourse by formulating a thesis statement . . ." and "summarize the central message in a manner consistent with the purpose" (III. a. 2., p. 119).

From these expectations, we derive the Desired Results 1-3 for the class session on Informative Speaking and Topic Choice. Additionally, we look to David Zarefsky (2008) who provides us with direction toward achieving these results. Zarefsky emphasizes the importance of identifying goals and strategies for informative speaking in order to fashion a speech topic that meets the needs of the rhetorical situation (pp. 362-374). Therefore, Desired Result 4 is included as a means of further refining topics and focusing them with an informative purpose.

1. Students will demonstrate an ability to generate speech topic ideas.

(Based on II. a., b., c., Kansas Core Outcomes Project, p. 119)

2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to narrow a topic according to purpose, audience, context, and time constraints.

(Based on II. a., b., c., Kansas Core Outcomes Project, p. 119)

3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to narrow a topic by developing a thesis statement.

(Based on III. a., 2., Kansas Core Outcomes Project, p. 119)

4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to use informative strategies as a means of achieving informative goals.

(Based on Zarefsky, pp. 362-374, *Clarifying Your Informative Goal and Informative Strategies*)

ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE

Desired Result No. 1.: Students will demonstrate an ability to generate speech topic ideas.

Acceptable Evidence: Students will individually generate a *personalized list of potential speech topics* that can be consulted over the course of the semester.

Desired Result No. 2.: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to narrow a topic according to purpose, audience, context, and time constraints.

Acceptable Evidence: *Students will generate *examples of focused topics and thesis statements* during in-class discussion and group exercises.

*Students will turn in a fine-tuned *informative speech topic proposal* as the result of an out-of-class assignment.

Desired Result No. 3: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to narrow a topic by developing a thesis statement.

Acceptable Evidence: *Students will generate *examples of focused topics and thesis statements* during in-class discussion and group exercises.

*Students will turn in a fine-tuned *informative speech topic proposal* as the result of an out-of-class assignment.

Desired Result No. 4: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to use informative strategies as a means of achieving informative goals.

Acceptable Evidence: *Students will participate in *class lecture/discussion focused on exploring the importance of identifying goals and strategies*.

*Students will *identify their specific goals and strategies within the informative speech topic proposal*.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The instructional activities listed below have been identified and developed with the purpose of assisting the student in understanding the processual nature of speech planning. Topic brainstorming and thesis development—if conducted in a purposeful, strategic fashion—can lead to successful, focused speech topic proposals. (And ultimately successful, focused speeches!) While these tasks and the results of these instructional activities are not entirely limited to the general purpose of informative speaking, these instructional activities incorporate the importance of understanding, developing, and using informative goals and strategies.

1. Speech Topic Brainstorming Exercises

- *Acceptable Evidence for Desired Result No. 1: Students will individually generate a personalized list of potential speech topics that can be consulted over the course of the entire semester.*

Focusing a portion of the class session on brainstorming potential speech topics not only will leave the student with a useful resource for the remainder of the semester, but also will provide them with an awareness of how issues outside the classroom can be approached (e.g., potential solutions to problems at work and home).

Resources

- German, K., et al., (p. 208)
- Homchick, J. A., (pp. 47-56)
- Peterson, J. A. (online source)

2. Lecture/Discussion

- *Acceptable Evidence for Desired Result No. 2 & 3: Students will generate examples of focused topics and thesis statements during in-class discussion and group exercises.*
- *Acceptable Evidence for Desired Result No. 4: Students will participate in class discussion focused on exploring the importance of identifying goals and strategies.*

Lecture and discussion will provide context for the key concepts and ideas that set the stage for in-class exercises. For example, lecture and discussion focused on informative goals and strategies will provide an entry point for discussing the constraints of the rhetorical situation that, when recognized, can lead to a well-developed thesis statement.

Resources

- Asbury, M. B. (lecture notes)
- Fraleigh, D. M., & Tuman, J. S. (pp. 140-155, 250-260)
- Zarefsky, D., (pp. 105-111)

3. Thesis Statement Development/Critique Exercise

- *Acceptable Evidence for Desired Result No. 3: Students will generate examples of focused topics and thesis statements during in-class discussion and group exercises.*

Together, the class will select potential topics and work through a “basic speech formula” based on the “Speech Planning Form: Informative Speech” found in *Blueprints for Success* (p. 59). The class will identify a topic, a specific purpose, a thesis statement, and main points for the body of a speech. As the class members work on these formulae, it should become clear that the process assists the speaker in refining his or her focus. In turn, this process will refine the speaker’s thesis and main points.

Resources

- Carver, L., Grill, K., & Bruss, K., (p. 59)
- German, K. M., Gronbeck, B. E., Ehninger, D., & Monroe, A. H., (pp. 16-31)
- Zarefsky, D., (pp. 116-118)

4. Speech Topic Proposal Assignment

- *Acceptable Evidence for Desired Result No. 3: Students will turn in a fine-tuned informative speech topic proposal as the result of an out-of-class assignment.*
- *Acceptable Evidence for Desired Result No. 4: Students will identify their specific goals and strategies within the informative speech topic proposal.*

Taking their lists of potential topics and their notes from the Thesis Statement Development exercise, students will leave class with the assignment to refine an idea for an informative speech topic and to return to the subsequent class session with a well-considered and developed speech topic proposal. This assignment will be executed by turning in page 59 in the *Blueprints for Success* handbook with some additional requirements. (Students will identify their specific goals and strategies.)

Resources

- Carver, L., Grill, K., & Bruss, K., (p. 59)
Have students indicate on this sheet their specific speech goals and strategies.

References

- Asbury, M. B. (2008). *Informing and selecting a topic* [Lecture notes]. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas: Speaker Audience Communication.
- Carver, L., Grill, K., & Bruss, K. (Eds.). (2009). *Blueprint for success*. New York, NY: Pearson Custom Publishing.
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- Homchick, J. A. (2008). *Instructor's resource manual for Zarefsky: Public speaking strategies for success*. New York, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Peterson, J. A. (n. d.). *Speech topic: 3 ways to find the speech topic you like*. Retrieved from <http://www.speech-topics-help.com/speech-topic.html>
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- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (1998). *Understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Zarefsky, D. (2008). *Public speaking strategies for success*. New York, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.